

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PRETOR 03425 01 OF 02 130744Z

ACTION AF-04

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8048
INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
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AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PRETORIA 3425

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR SF

SUBJ: PROSPECTS FOR CHANGE: CONVERSATION WITH
FOREIGN MINISTER BOTHA

REF: PRETORIA 3418 (AND PREVIOUS)

1. SUMMARY: IN A RECENT PRIVATE CONVERSATION, FOREIGN
MINISTER BOTHA DESCRIBED THE COMPOSITION OF THE CABINET
COMMITTEE CONSIDERING CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES AFFECTING
INDIANS AND COLOREDS. HE REPORTED THAT THE COMPOSITION
AND FUNCTION OF THE PROPOSED JOINT BODY COMPRISING
REPRESENTATIVES OF THE THREE PARLIAMENTS WAS THE CENTER
OF CONTROVERSY WITHIN THE NATIONAL PARTY. BOTHA EXPLAINED
THAT UNDER THE NEW SCHEME, THE JOINT BODY WOULD "DISCUSS"
AND "REACH AGREEMENT." NO AGREEMENT WOULD AMOUNT TO
NO DECISION. CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS, HE SAID, ARE ATTACKING
THIS ARRANGEMENT BECAUSE IT AMOUNTS TO DECISION-SHARING
AND IN FACT PROVIDES THE INDIANS AND COLOREDS A VETO.

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PAGE 02 PRETOR 03425 01 OF 02 130744Z

BOTHA, WHO APPARENTLY FAVORS THIS COURSE, ALSO ASERTEED
THAT HE WAS UNDER INTENSE PRESSURE WITHIN THE CABINET
TO RETRACT HIS RECENT STATEMENT CONDEMNING THE IMMORALITY
ACT. END SUMMARY.

2. IN A CONVERSATION WITH FONMIN BOTH ON JULY 11, I ASKED
HIM FOR HIS VIEWS ON THE PROSPECTS FOR CHANGE AS A RESULT

OF THE WORK OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE ON MODIFICATION IN THE WESTMINSTER SYSTEM. AT FIRST BOTHA DECLINED TO COMMENT ARGUING THAT HE WAS NOT A MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE AND THEREFORE DID NOT HAVE FIRST-HAND KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR THINKING. THIS LED TO A DIGRESSION INTO THE COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE WHICH HAS NEVER BEEN MADE PUBLIC. BOTHA SAID THAT IT WAS A VERY INFORMAL GROUP UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF DEFENSE MINISTER P.W. BOTHA. IT IS COMPRISED OF THE FOUR PROVINCIAL HEADS OF THE NATIONAL PARTY (BOTHA - CAPE, VAN DER SPUY - ORANGE FREE STATE, HORWOOD - NATAL, AND MULDER - TRANSVAAL) PLUS THE MINISTERS OF INDIAN AND COLORED AFFAIRS.

3. HAVING WARMED TO THE SUBJECT, BOTHA WENT ON TO CONFIRM THAT MULDER HAD TOLD ME LAST WEEK THAT THE COMMITTEE WAS STILL AT WORK AND EXPECTED TO HAVE ITS REPORT READY BY THE END OF JULY. HE ALSO INDICATED THAT CURRENT THINKING IS TO HAVE SEPARATE PARLIAMENTS FOR WHITES, INDIANS AND COLOREDS, WITH A FOURTH ENTITY BRINGING TOGETHER REPRESENTATIVES OF THE THREE PARLIAMENTS. BOTHA SAID THAT THE COMPOSITION AND FUNCTIONS OF THIS GROUP IS THE CENTER OF CONTROVERSY WITHIN NATIONAL PARTY RANKS AT THE PRESENT TIME. THERE IS A GROUP (WHICH HE DECLINED TO IDENTIFY) WHICH ADVOCATES GIVING THE COMBINED PARLIAMENTARY GROUP AUTHORITY TO DISCUSS AND REACH AGREEMENT ON ISSUES WITHIN PRESCRIBED AREAS. ONCE AGREEMENT IS REACHED, EACH CONTINGENT WOULD GO BACK TO ITS RESPECTIVE PARLIAMENT AND SEEK TO ENACT
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PAGE 03 PRETOR 03425 01 OF 02 130744Z

THE AGREED MEASURES INTO LAW. BOTHA SAID THE FORCES OPPOSED TO ANY FORM OF POWER SHARING ARE NOW MARSHALLING THEIR FORCES AGAINST THIS FORMULA. THEY ARGUE THAT IT AMOUNTS TO GIVING INDIANS AND COLOREDS A VETO BECAUSE IF THEIR REPRESENTATIONS ON THE COMBINED PARLIAMENTARY GROUP REFUSE TO AGREE OR FAIL TO ENACT A MEASURE IN THEIR RESPECTIVE PARLIAMENT, THEY COULD IN EFFECT BLOCK ACTION. THE OPPONENTS GO FURTHER AND SAY THIS DEVICE IS WORSE THAN DIRECT REPRESENTATION IN A SINGLE PARLIAMENT WHERE AT LEAST THEORETICALLY THE COMBINED WHITE VOTE COULD PREVAIL OVER THE COMBINED INDIAN-COLORED VOTE. BOTHA SAID HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT THE OUTCOME OF THE DEBATE WOULD BE BUT THE ANTI-POWER SHARING FORCES WERE MOUNTING A DETERMINED CAMPAIGN TO BLOCK ANY BREACH OF THE SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT POLICY IN ITS PUREST FORM.

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PAGE 01 PRETOR 03425 02 OF 02 130748Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PRETORIA 3425

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4. IN AN EFFORT TO CLARIFY THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE PRESENT CABINET COUNCIL MECHANISM AND WHAT BOTHA HAD OUTLINED, I ASKED HIM WHETHER THERE WAS REALLY THAT MUCH DIFFERENCE. (NOTE THAT MULDER HAD ARGUED THERE WAS NOT--PARA 5 OF REFTTEL.) BOTHA QUICKLY RESPONDED THAT THERE WAS A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE. THE PRESENT CABINET COUNCIL ONLY "DISCUSSED" ISSUES. UNDER THE NEW SCHEME, THE COMBINED PARLIAMENTARY GROUP WOULD "DISCUSS" AND "REACH AGREEMENT." IF NO AGREEMENT WERE REACHED, THERE WOULD BE NO "DECISION." HENCE, BOTHA POINTED OUT, THE ANTI-POWER-SHARING GROUP WERE NOT TALKING NONSENSE WHEN THEY ARGUED THAT SHARED DECISION MAKING WAS INVOLVED.

5. I ASKED BOTHA WHETHER THERE WERE ANY CHANCES OF DROPPING THE THREE-PARLIAMENTARY IDEA IN FAVOR OF A SINGLE PARLIAMENT WITH INDIAN AND COLORED PARTICIPATION. BOTHA REPLIED THAT THIS WAS OUT OF THE QUESTION.

6. COMMENT: THROUGHOUT THE CONVERSATION BOTHA DID NOT
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PAGE 02 PRETOR 03425 02 OF 02 130748Z

EXPRESSLY STATE WHICH SIDE HE FAVORED IN THIS ARGUMENT. I SURMISE, HOWEVER, THAT HIS SYMPATHIES LIE WITH THOSE WHO SUPPORT THE LIMITED POWER-SHARING SCHEME. AT THE MOMENT BOTHA IS RUNNING SOMEWHAT GUNSHY BECAUSE OF THE REACTION TO HIS PUBLIC STAND IN FAVOR OF DOING AWAY WITH THE IMMORALITY ACT AND THE MIXED MARRIAGES ACT. HE SAID

HE WAS UNDER INTENSE PRESSURE WITHIN THE CABINET TO
RETRACT AND LAST WEEK HIS POSITION WITHIN THE CABINET
"WAS THREATENED." HE HAD NOT MADE ANY STATEMENT WITHDRAWING
OR QUALIFYING WHAT HE HAD SAID AND HOPED TO BE ABLE
TO MAINTAIN THAT STAND. HE CLAIMED THAT THE
PARTY DISCIPLINE ISSUE IS NOT DEAD AND WOULD COME UP
FOR DISCUSSION IN THE CABINET WHEN IT RECONVENES IN
AUGUST. ALLOWING FOR A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF BOTH A
HYPERBOLE, HE DOES HAVE HIS NECK OUT ON A VARIETY OF
APARTHEID ISSUES AND UNDOUBTEDLY THE CONSERVATIVES WOULD
LIKE TO CHOP IT OFF OR FORCE HIM TO PULL IT IN.
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